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militant Hindus and Buddhist Dalits: hegemony and resistance in an Indian slum

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The influence of communication and discourse theories on studies of ideology has led to a shift from an epistemological emphasis on ideology as a system of false ideas subordinate to Truth or Science, to a conceptualization of ideology as an aspect of culture that reproduces and maintains systems of domination.[1] Linguistic practice, or discourse, is viewed as the vehicle through which ideology mobilizes meaning, legitimizes power, and reproduces asymmetrical social relations (Hendricks 1988; Thompson 1984).

Two assumptions implicit in studies of social reproduction are pertinent to the current conceptualization of ideology. There is an assumption of consensus, which regards actors as so shaped by the dominant discourse that their ability to conceptualize a viable alternative is limited; actors cannot think beyond the paradigm of the ruling system, which they unconsciously legitimize and reproduce (Thompson 1984:61). Alternatively, there is the assumption that society is so fragmented that actors cannot generate a coherent alternative to the dominant discourse, which legitimizes and reproduces the system despite opposition (Thompson 1984:62–63). In either case, the argument that ideology operates through discourse to sustain domination implies that only hegemonic[2] groups benefit from the creative manipulation of ideas, language, and meaning. This argument both overlooks the possibility that ideology is embodied in practical relations as well as in discourse, and denies the effective actions of nonhegemonic groups in their resistance to domination. Relations of power are not unilaterally imposed through dominant discourses, but are constituted through mutual practices that present a dialectic of hegemony and resistance. In writing about power relations, it is necessary to try to capture this dialectic.

In this paper, I analyze the relations of power between caste Hindus and Buddhist Dalits[3] in Marutinagar,[4] a slum in the city of Pune, located in the western Indian state of Maharashtra. The antagonism between these groups is rooted in the economic, religious, and political history of Maharashtra, which has strong traditions of both high-caste militancy and low-caste resistance to Brahman orthodoxy and caste injustice. These traditions, respectively, are invoked by contemporary militant Hindu[5] and Dalit organizations to assert and contest hegemony. In Marutinagar, high-caste Marathas, who view themselves as leaders of the slum's Hindu residents, have aligned with a statewide militant organization known as Patit Pawan,[6] which provides them with the ideology and political strategies needed to support their claims to leadership.

Ideologies and cultural identities are created by leaderships of hegemonic and nonhegemonic groups to consolidate their diverse followings into unified political communities. While discourse is pertinent to the constitution of ideology, ideological assumptions also are embodied in practices that structure relations between leaders and followers. Antagonism between Hindus and Buddhists is examined by analyzing their leaderships and the practices through which their respective ideologies are produced, reproduced, and disseminated. [hegemony, ideology, practice, cultural identity, Buddhism, militant Hinduism]

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Challenging them are Dalits, who have not formed alliances with other Dalit organizations or political parties, but who nevertheless maintain their autonomy by following the principles and practices of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, leader of the Untouchable movement.

To speak of an asymmetrical power relationship within the slum is to view power locally and contextually since, in relation to the larger society, all slum residents are economically, socially, and politically marginal. Their common marginality has not led to a sense of solidarity among them, however. I want to avoid the facile assertion that slum residents, as wage laborers, constitute a homogeneous working class whose shared interests are obscured through the ideological efforts of a ruling class. The assumptions of totality and false consciousness represent the heart of the epistemological approach to ideology. Instead, I prefer to begin from the assumption that a society is forged from many histories and constituted through contradictory traditions and movements. The actors involved in constructing a society represent diverse social fragments,[7] which neither share one another's interpretations of the past and present, nor embrace one another's vision of the future. Communities founded upon ethnic, class, or religious identities do not a priori exist as naturally integrated elements, but rather are continually "in the making" (Fox 1987) through the efforts of leaders to develop cultural bonds and promote unity among disparate social fragments. The relationship between caste Hindus and Dalits in Marutinagar provides a focus for understanding the process through which political communities are formed from social fragments through the practices of leaderships.

Marutinagar in sociohistorical context

The residents of Marutinagar, as in most Indian slums, are a heterogeneous group, representing various castes, languages, religions, and village origins.[8] Of the approximately 2000 families in the slum, almost 1500 are Marathi-speaking caste Hindus, primarily from the Maratha agricultural caste[9] and other smaller agricultural and artisan castes. The remaining 500 families are Marathi-speaking Mahars, Maharashtra's largest ex-Untouchable caste and the first to adopt the term Dalit.

The caste Hindu families migrated to Marutinagar from villages in the coastal Konkan and inland Desh regions of Maharashtra that lack sufficient irrigation and have few alternative employment opportunities. These families either rented small plots of land or worked as agricultural laborers in their villages, and they migrated to Pune after a drought in 1974 had severely affected their crops and their ability to find employment. In Pune, several Marathas used their village contacts and found employment in small and medium-sized factories. These men, economically better off than other Marutinagar residents, were among the first to become active in the politics of the slum and to use their political contacts to obtain water taps, ration cards, and electricity poles for slum residents. They now are the acknowledged leaders of the caste Hindus in Marutinagar. The caste Hindus, who either continue to use their traditional skills in craft occupations, are self-employed, or hold low-level positions in service fields, generally are not active in politics, but instead rely on the Maratha leaders to mediate with government officials and other outside groups.

Dalit families migrated from villages in the economically depressed Marathwada region where they were landless and employed as agricultural laborers. Lacking contacts in urban industries, most Dalits work for daily wages in construction, domestic labor, or other forms of casual labor. A few educated Dalits, including the leaders of the community, have been able to find clerical positions in government service. Dalits initially participated with Marathas in the political activities of the slum, but discrimination against them by caste Hindus led them to abandon these cooperative efforts. The Dalit community has developed its own contacts with government officials and has benefited from the government's "compensatory discrimination" policies (Galanter 1984).

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The relation between Dalits and caste Hindus in Marutinagar reflects stresses in Maharashtrian villages and cities produced by political and economic changes of the last three decades. Since the formation of the state of Maharashtra in 1960, Marathas have dominated state politics and have controlled the rural cooperative economy. State government economic policies involving credit and loans, irrigation facilities, price guarantees, and tariff protection have favored Maratha commercial farmers and have allowed these elites to monopolize land and irrigation facilities in the villages (Rosenthal 1977). This monopoly has contributed to the impoverishment and migration of small farmers and agricultural laborers of all castes. Dalits are especially vulnerable, however, since they constitute a disproportionate number of landless agricultural laborers. The Mahars' traditional occupation as village servants did not give them access to large amounts of village land and today many Dalits in villages cultivate unused government land. Maratha farmers, with the help of militant caste Hindu organizations, have been confiscating this land, attacking and destroying Dalit crops and homes, and forcing Dalits to migrate to cities (Jondhale 1987).

The tensions in rural areas are exacerbated in the cities as Dalits compete with other migrants for limited jobs and slum housing, and as better educated Dalits compete with middle- and lower-middle class urbanites for clerical positions and higher educational benefits. The government's policy of reserving positions for disadvantaged groups in educational facilities, political offices, and public sector employment has become a rationalization for the intensification of caste Hindu antagonism toward Dalits. This antagonism may be understood against a post-Independence background of intense economic stress for urban middle and lower-middle classes that was generated by a slow economic growth rate during the 1950s and 1960s, threats to small businesses from industrial monopolies, price rises, inflation, high tax rates, stagnant salaries throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and inadequate higher educational facilities. Pressure on the middle classes to maintain their standard of living and on small factory workers to cope with job insecurity and low wages has placed middle- and working-class caste Hindus in direct confrontation with the demands of minority Dalit, Muslim, and Christian communities for access to jobs, education, political influence, and higher social status.

Militant organizations, even more powerful in the cities, have targeted slums, factories, and colleges as areas in which they can be most effective in maintaining Hindu influence and containing what they perceive to be the growing power of minorities. Dalits and Muslims, caste Hindus claim, are given protection by the government and become powerful because of the government's assistance. Hindus, therefore, need the protection of their own organizations. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Brahman-dominated militant organization founded in Nagpur in 1925, has, since Independence, responded to this perceived need for protection by entering the arena of parliamentary politics, expanding its cultural and educational work, and increasing its mass-based activities.[10] In Maharashtra, these changes in the RSS agenda have taken place against a background of declining Brahman power. The assassination in 1948 of Mahatma Gandhi by a Pune Brahman with links to the RSS provided the catalyst for anti-RSS and anti-Brahman violence in many parts of Maharashtra.[11] The RSS was officially banned, its leadership jailed, and its property destroyed. Brahmans were attacked by non-Brahmans, particularly by Marathas, and many were forced to abandon their landholding and money-lending positions in the villages. Throughout Maharashtra Brahmans lost local-level political power and rural landed interests, both of which eventually came under the control of Marathas.

The perceived desperation of their situation led younger members of the RSS to argue for the expansion and increasing militancy of the organization. In response, the RSS Brahman leadership in Maharashtra made a deliberate effort to establish a rapprochement with Marathas as part of a political strategy for building a mass-based organization. A consequence of this rapprochement has been the establishment of militant organizations that recruit the lower castes from factories and slums to engage in violence against Muslims and Dalits. These organizations are funded by small shopkeepers, professionals, factory owners, and other small businessmen;

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are disciplined and well-structured; and invariably have a lower-middle-class Brahman and Maratha leadership. Their membership among sectors of the working class is growing, however, and in class and caste terms they represent respectively a middle- and working-class bloc, and an alliance of Brahmans and non-Brahmans. Militant organizations build Hindu temples and schools to propagate their ideas and to train cadres; provoke riots against Muslims; appropriate village land farmed by Dalits; attempt to reconvert Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians to Hinduism; establish self-defense groups; and, in the words of one militant leader, "foster nationalism of the German or Japanese variety" (quoted in Badhwar 1986:84).

The tensions in rural and urban Maharashtra have penetrated Marutinagar, where the antagonism between caste Hindus and Dalits has become a potentially disruptive force within the slum. As yet, this antagonism has not been expressed in overt acts of violence, but rather is apparent in the mutual exclusiveness of Hindus and Dalits in all social, religious, and political activities. Social interaction is inhibited by the deliberate spatial separation of slum households, and a designated row of houses serves as the dividing line between the caste Hindu and Dalit sections of the slum. There are water taps in each section so Hindu and Dalit women do not have to mingle while standing in the queue. Women from either community do not visit one another's homes; children tend to play in their own section of the slum; and men spend their leisure time smoking, gambling, and conversing with members of their own community.

Hindus and Dalits have constructed temples in their respective sections of the slum and each group organizes its own religious celebrations. The Hindu temple is named Maruti, after a popular deity in the Hindu pantheon. It is significant that in Maharashtra the god Maruti "is associated with the struggle against 'evil' and his incarnations appear when Hindus are 'oppressed' " (Andersen and Damle 1987:35). Hindu community celebrations in Marutinagar revolve around traditional religious holidays as well as the birth of Shivaji, the historic hero of Maharashtra. During these public celebrations, Hindus freely use the limited space available in the slum for processions, community devotional singing, street theater, and other cultural performances. The leadership also takes advantage of certain holidays to hold political rallies, and Hindus congregate in public areas to listen to speeches and meet leaders and visiting activists.

Dalits have developed their own syncretic form of Buddhism. They no longer worship idols of Hindu deities, fast, or do *puja* (Hindu prayer ceremony), but they continue to acknowledge the major Hindu holidays in addition to their own celebrations on the birthdates of Ambedkar and the Buddha. They recognize the Hindu holidays privately (by making sweets), however, and do not display a public association with Hindu deities by participation in forms of community worship, although they are required by the Maratha leadership to make a small monetary contribution to public Hindu celebrations. Dalit community celebrations are confined to their temple, and they do not march in procession through the slum or hold religious or political ceremonies in the public space. In Marutinagar it is understood that Hindu holidays are for the caste Hindus and that Dalit celebrations are tolerated without harassment only if they remain within the Buddhist temple or take place outside of the slum.

The political activities of Hindus and Dalits conform to the established pattern of separatism, despite the common social and economic problems of the two groups. Hindu and Dalit leaders have found distinct *mandals* (associations), which speak only for their respective communities in dealing with government officials and demand facilities only for their sections of the slum. Power relations between the mandals are influenced by the contacts each has with outside political organizations. The Maratha leaders' alliance with Patit Pawan has strengthened their position both within the slum and with city officials. Organized in 1969 by seven Maratha and Brahman men affiliated with the RSS, Patit Pawan was established for the purpose of recruiting a low-caste militant following for the RSS. As the Brahman secretary of Patit Pawan, himself a member of RSS, explained, "The RSS is not militant. They do more educational work. Patit Pawan is interested in taking issues to the streets. Hindus are divided and each is in his own

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home. We want them to come out in the streets as Hindus." It is precisely for this reason that Patit Pawan focuses on the lower castes in the slums for, as one member explained, "[Militant] organizations need unemployed people . . . who are ready to fight at any moment." In Marutinagar, Patit Pawan has been effective in supporting the Maratha leadership and has been instrumental in promoting the antagonism of caste Hindus toward Dalits.

The Dalit leaders are concerned primarily with resisting the hegemonic thrust of the Marathas and asserting their own autonomy in the slum. They have refrained from establishing formal political alliances, however, and have restricted their association with other Dalit groups to participation in Buddhist religious celebrations. The Dalit leadership hesitates to align politically with Dalit organizations because of the extreme factionalism within the Dalit movement. There is one parliamentary party that represents Dalits, but radical Dalit groups dismiss it as ineffective. Among the radical groups, however, there is little consensus regarding tactics, organizations are ephemeral, and personality often determines leadership. These groups are effective in small clusters of neighboring slums, but have difficulty maintaining broad statewide coalitions. Dalits in Marutinagar claim an ideological association with other Dalits, but favor neither the parliamentary nor the radical groups. Their organizational separateness has not prevented them from obtaining facilities and benefits from outside officials, but it has left them vulnerable to the internal hegemony of the caste Hindus.

Thus, although Hindus and Dalits inhabit a single slum, they do not share social space, do not participate in one another's religious performances, and do not act together politically to improve their living conditions. But the exclusiveness of these communities must not be construed as a "separate but equal" state of affairs. The Maratha leadership's attempts to appropriate public space, religious expression, and political influence in order to establish a foundation for the acceptance of militant activities in the slum constitute a form of aggression against the Dalit community, which responds by asserting its own autonomy. The antagonism between caste Hindus and Dalits in Marutinagar is expressed directly through the political mandals, whose leaders have adopted antithetical ideological positions and cultural identities that are embedded in Maharashtrian traditions.

resistance and militancy in Maharashtrian tradition

The Dalit and Maratha leaderships in Marutinagar draw upon Maharashtrian traditions of low-caste anti-Brahman protest and high-caste militancy to form contemporary ideologies and cultural identities and to develop viable political practices. These traditions are associated with particular caste alliances. Historically, the politically relevant caste categories in Maharashtra have been Brahman, non-Brahman, and Untouchable, and the common pattern of alliance has involved non-Brahmans and Untouchables standing together in opposition to Brahmans. This pattern also is evident in northern India in the 6th century (B.C.) heterodox movements of Mahavira and Gautama Buddha, founders of Jainism and Buddhism respectively, which countered Brahmanism with atheistic interpretations of religion. Their rejection of caste and orthodox ritual attracted the newly rising urban commercial groups, the lower castes and women, and established a precedent of religious alternatives to Brahmanism. Low-caste protest in Maharashtra draws from the early Buddhist precedent, as well as from devotional movements in India, and incorporates them into a tradition of resistance that remains active today.

The Maharashtrian *bhakti* (devotion) movement represents an early expression of low-caste protest against the social and ritual superiority of Brahmans. During the late 13th century, poet-saints in Maharashtra began to disseminate among the lower castes ideas of spiritual egalitarianism, nonviolence, and personal devotion to god. The saints whose poetry inspired and sustained this devotional movement were from all castes and were opposed to and outspokenly challenged the religious dominance of the orthodox Brahman community. Maharashtrian poet-

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saints undermined Brahman authority by translating Sanskrit texts, formerly available only to Brahmans, into the vernacular Marathi for the education of the common people; by replacing Brahman priests in providing spiritual guidance for all castes; by advocating personal devotion, rather than costly ritual or esoteric knowledge, as a legitimate path to salvation for the lower castes; and by acknowledging Untouchables and women as spiritual leaders. The devotional movement flourished in Maharashtra through the mid-17th century and brought together caste Hindus and Untouchables, men and women, and Hindus and Muslims, establishing a tradition of equality and anti-orthodoxy that has continued into the 20th century.[12]

The challenge to Brahman religious authority brought reprisal from the orthodox Brahman community, which became increasingly hostile toward the various bhakti sects. As the sects persisted in their "democratisation of mystical experience" (Ranade 1983:2), the orthodox retaliated with critical commentaries in their literature and with the occasional persecution of bhakti sects or saints. The teachings of these sects became politically relevant during the mid-17th century as the Mughal expansion into the Deccan necessitated opposition by a united Maratha nation.[13] The poet-saints had generated a Maratha ethos that prepared the way for a Maratha nation and unified the masses through ideas of equality (Zelliot 1976). At the same time, however, unity of the lower castes was achieved through their opposition to the Brahman elite. By the mid-17th century, this opposition had to be quelled, Hindus had to be united, and lower-caste antagonism had to be channeled against the Mughals. The orthodox responded to this challenge by creating their own militant version of Maratha nationalism, Maharashtra *dharma* (duty).[14]

The writings of Ramdas, the 17th-century Brahman saint and spiritual advisor to the Maratha leader, Shivaji, clearly argue the necessity for the return of Brahman supremacy in the interest of the nation. Ramdas interprets the crisis of Maratha society as a breakdown in the social order due to Muslim oppression, Hindu conversion to Islam, and the usurpation of Brahman spiritual leadership by low-caste saints and gurus (Ranade 1983). His model for the ideal Hindu social order is based on the legendary rule of Lord Rama, referred to as *Ram Rajya* (Rama's Rule), in which Rama's strict observance of his kingly duty, his dharma, assured a just and orderly society. Ramdas believed that the reinstatement of Brahman authority in both spiritual and administrative capacities would revitalize Hinduism, restore order to the nation, and usher in an era of Ram Rajya (Joshi 1970). Ramdas' emphasis on the "Mahomedan" as both a political and religious enemy of the Maratha people established a rationale for the conjunction of politics and religion that reasoned that religious freedom was possible only with political liberty, and so it was the duty of every Maratha (Maharashtra dharma) to defend Hinduism through the establishment of political sovereignty.

The antithetical traditions of low-caste protest and high-caste militancy have developed in confrontation with one another and continue to represent competing movements in Maharashtra. The principles of equality and resistance to high-caste authority have been upheld since the 17th century by anti-orthodox sects and, in the 19th and 20th centuries, by the non-Brahman and Untouchable movements.[15] Maharashtra dharma, emphasizing Brahman supremacy, Hindu unity, and the political defense of religion, has provided the philosophical foundation for activists involved in 19th- and 20th-century secret societies, cow protection societies, and numerous militant organizations. In Marutinagar, the Dalit and Maratha mandals have coalesced around leaderships that have incorporated these traditions into distinct and equally antithetical ideologies and cultural identities.

ideological discourse and cultural identity

Ideology is central to leadership and is embodied in the discourses and cultural identities that leaders create, as well as in the practices they institute. These embodiments of ideology

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can be separated only analytically. In this section I focus on the ideological discourses and cultural identities associated with the Dalit and Maratha mandals, and in the following section I examine their relation to specific political practices.

While one task of a leadership is to integrate potential supporters and create a distinctive political community, another task is to define that community in contradistinction to some Other. Ideologies and cultural identities thus serve the dual purpose of unity and opposition. Ideological discourses are constructed from the ensemble of traditional elements that a leadership reinterprets, imbues with new meaning, and offers as an explanation of social reality. Cultural identities are pertinent to this process. The dominant group attempts to appropriate culture by defining the identity and reality (past and present) of all social groups. Nonhegemonic groups resist by rejecting the imposed reality and reconstructing their own identity. Ideology, therefore, does not refer solely to the ways in which meaning is mobilized to sustain relations of domination, but also refers to the ways in which nonhegemonic groups reinterpret their past in order to meaningfully interpret their present. Ideology and cultural identity, in other words, are just as much "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1985) as of the dominant.

The production of ideological discourse involves the intellectual contributions of many actors, and Maharashtrian traditions have been reinterpreted under varying historical circumstances by a number of popularly recognized leaders. The Dalit and Maratha mandals have adopted respectively the philosophies of the Untouchable leader, Dr. Ambedkar, and the nationalist theoretician, Veer V. D. Savarkar.

Dr. Ambedkar and Dalit identity

The Dalit mandal was established in Marutinagar in 1982 by Dalit converts to Buddhism. The need for a separate Dalit mandal became evident after a protracted disagreement with caste Hindus caused the dissolution of the original slum mandal, which represented all residents, and fostered enmity between Dalits and caste Hindus. The subsequent association of caste Hindus and Patit Pawan exacerbated this antagonism. The Dalit leaders explain that their mandal was formed because Dalits "need protection from being cheated. We organize for protection and to educate [Dalits] about their economic interests. Then others cannot bring pressure on you if you have an organization." The mandal's concern with protection (from caste Hindu discriminatory practices) and education reflects the extent of Dr. Ambedkar's influence on Dalits.

Ambedkar, born into the Untouchable Mahar caste, took the Maharashtrian tradition of low-caste resistance to its farthest extreme. His attempt to instill a sense of pride and autonomy among Untouchables is evident in his dual attack on the cultural and economic aspects of caste inequality. He led Untouchables into Hindu temples, publicly burned the Hindu law books that legitimized untouchability, encouraged Untouchables to drink from public water tanks, and emphasized the importance of education. His concern with education is especially significant, since under Hindu law Untouchables had been denied all forms of secular and religious instruction. Ambedkar was convinced that "without much knowledge, there can be no power" (quoted in Joshi 1986:31).

Toward the end of his life, recognizing that Hinduism and caste injustice were inseparable, Ambedkar converted to Buddhism and urged his followers to do the same. Ambedkar selected from Buddhism those attributes that were relevant to the contemporary struggle of the Untouchables. He focused on the heterodox tradition associated with Buddhism and linked it to ideas of social democracy. The Buddha had provided one of the earliest critiques of orthodox Brahmanism, which for centuries propagated the social and spiritual inferiority of women and the lower castes. The Buddha attempted to counter Brahmanism with a philosophy of spiritual equality and a notion of atheistic morality as the essence of social and religious duty. Ambedkar

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coupled these aspects of the Buddha's philosophy with an emphasis on rationalism to create a vision of a secular, egalitarian society. He criticized the conjunction of religion and law that legalized the oppression of Untouchables under Hinduism, and urged that law be removed from the sanction of religion. He advocated a secular state, an egalitarian society, and a religion based on ethics.

Mahars in Maharashtra have been the primary support of Ambedkar's movement and have accepted his principles of secularism and egalitarianism. They have signaled their rejection of religious orthodoxy and caste hierarchy by converting to their own syncretic form of Buddhism and adopting the casteless term *Dalit*.[16] Buddhist Dalits have discarded their idols of Hindu deities and have replaced esoteric notions of god with an emphasis on moral living: "Just keep your mind pure. Don't steal. If you see a cripple or a blind one, help them cross the street. If a child falls, pick him up. That's god, and whoever does that is god's man" (quoted in Zelliot, in press). The new Buddhism accords women equality with men, rejects untouchability and other forms of caste distinctions, emphasizes the importance of rationality, intelligence, and education, and denies the Hindu view of *karma* that interprets the suffering of Dalits as retribution for their sins in a previous birth (Zelliot, in press).

Dalit resistance to Brahman-imposed definitions of their identity and social worth has been sustained during the last two decades through the works of Dalit poets and autobiographers, both women and men, who have challenged Brahman leadership in intellectual production. The "Mahar as 'Brahman' . . . The new Mahar, the Buddhist, the poet, with his new 'tongue' proclaims the human worth of all his fellows" (Zelliot 1978:101–102), and is perhaps the ultimate blow to Brahman authority. But uneducated Dalits living in slums also contribute significantly to the reconstruction of Dalit identity. Their social critique aims specifically at high-caste Marathas and Brahmans, while maintaining that "poor people throughout the world are Dalits." To many poor slum residents, Dalit identity implies the recognition of social class divisions and defines Dalits as an oppressed, in opposition to a privileged class.

Savarkar, struggle, and Hindu unity

The resistance of the Dalit community in Marutinagar is countered by the caste Hindu mandal, which was formed in 1984 by several Marathas who had recently joined Patit Pawan and wanted to extend the organization's work to the slum. Patit Pawan's support for the mandal has increased the influence of the Maratha leaders among Hindu slum residents who, like the Dalit leaders, also express a need for protection. Residents believe that the alliance with Patit Pawan is in their best interest because "A mandal is limited only to the slum. So whatever they can do for the slum is very limited. Patit Pawan is on the state level and now we can go outside the slum. Now we can do many things. The slum people need [Patit Pawan] because it represents many." But this ostensibly pragmatic decision to align with the militant organization does not imply that the ideological tenets of Patit Pawan are ignored by the slum residents. The Maratha leaders fully accept these tenets and work consistently to propagate the ideas of militant Hinduism among caste Hindus in the slum.

Militant Hinduism has many authors. Its genealogy begins with Ramdas and his philosophy of Maharashtra dharma; is carried forward by the 18th-century Brahman ministers of the Maratha state; is expressed during the Independence movement in the writings of Bengali and Maharashtrian leaders such as Aurobindo Ghose, Lokmanya Tilak, and Swami Vivekananda; and is wedded to an organizational structure by Dr. K. B. Hedgewar, the founder of the RSS, and his successor, M. S. Golwalkar. But it is Veer V. D. Savarkar, an early militant for independence, who provided the theoretical conceptualization of militant Hinduism that has been adopted by most militant organizations.

The salient features of Savarkar's ideology are the conception of Hindus as victims, the notion of struggle as a fundamental principle of life, and the conviction that Hindu unity can be

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achieved only through the establishment of a Hindu *Rashtra* (Hindu Nation). Savarkar reinterpreted the tradition of Maharashtra dharma within a social Darwinist framework to explain why the Hindu people had not realized their full potential as a nation. He begins from the premise that Hindus are weak and oppressed because they are divided by caste, sect, language, and region, and that to protect themselves they must unite and wage war against their enemies. The struggle for unity is, for Hindus, a struggle for survival, since "Those alone who can stand this fierce ordeal will prove their fitness, not only the moral but even the physical fitness, that entitles races . . . to survive in this world" (Savarkar 1971[1925]:21). Among the enemies of the Hindus are the Buddhists, the Muslims, and the British. Early Buddhism in particular diluted the strength of the Hindus by its belief in nonviolence, which rendered India weak and incapable of protecting itself against the Muslim and British invaders (Savarkar 1969[1923]). Savarkar's perception of Hindus as weak and victimized accounts for his emphasis on struggle and violence and for his characterization of Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence as a "moral perversity." He felt that Gandhi had betrayed the Hindu people to both the British and the Muslims by preaching "that the spinning qualities are more spiritual than the fighting ones and that the highest human virtue consists in getting killed by any invading aggressors than killing them in self-defense" (Savarkar 1984:154).

Savarkar attempted to reconstruct Hindu identity by going beyond the assertion that Hindus constitute a religious community, and arguing that they constitute a nation. Here Savarkar reinforces the relationship between religion and politics that Ramdas had established and presents a reinterpretation of Ram Rajya. A Hindu, Savarkar (1969[1923]) claimed, is not simply one who practices the Hindu religion. "Hindu" is a national identity, and the essence of what it means to be a Hindu is found in a common race, a common territory, and a common culture. Hindus are bound together by ties of blood, by love for the Fatherland, and by their Sanskritic culture. It is *Hindutva* (Hinduness) rather than Hinduism that characterizes the Hindu identity, and it is the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra that will assure the integrity of the Hindu race, territory, and culture.

Militant leaders in the RSS and Patit Pawan have accepted the challenge to establish a Hindu Rashtra and have instituted a form of practice through which they hope to accomplish this task.[17] These leaders have taken Savarkar's ideas and articulated them with popular traditions in Indian literature. The notion of disciplined and selfless action, through which common people may achieve salvation, is taken from the Bhagavad Gita and is central to militant activity. The RSS refers to this style of action as service to the nation, and the Maratha mandal leaders call it social work. Patit Pawan, Maratha leaders claim, "stands for Hindu unity and social work. The organization works very selflessly. It brings people together. We cannot be sure that [politicians] will always support us. For their own interest they may misguide us. But with Patit Pawan there is no question of that. It has no selfish interest." Selfless action represents the culturally specific form of political practice among militant Hindu groups.

The ideology of militant Hinduism, as it is interpreted by Patit Pawan and the Maratha leaders in Marutinagar, thus represents a synthesis of Savarkar's nationalist theory and popular Indian tradition. Succinctly stated, militant Hinduism maintains that life is an ongoing struggle wherein Hindus, because they are divided, have become victimized by minorities who are given protection and privileges by the secular state. The solution to this problem is the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra which will protect the rights of the majority Hindu community. The potential for a Hindu Rashtra exists because all Hindus are one, in spirit, race, and culture. Militant action and social work will defend the principles of Hinduism, reinforce the unity of the Hindu community, and bring about the goal of a Hindu Rashtra.

ideology and cultural practice

Ideological discourse attempts to reinterpret social reality, but whether it is constitutive of a new reality depends upon effective practice. Cultural practices produce and daily reproduce

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systems of power, which involve the interaction of hegemonic and nonhegemonic groups in dialectical tension. Ideologies then are not simply discourses or systems of ideas, but are realized through practices that members of a community establish among themselves, and between themselves and some Other (Hall 1985; Rancière 1974). In this section I hope to demonstrate that ideologies are embodied in and reproduced through the practices of leader-follower relations.

The attempts of the Maratha and Dalit leaders to mold political communities are effective to the extent that they speak to the economic, political, and social marginality of the slum residents, whose everyday experiences are a constant reminder of the vulnerability and impermanence of the slum community. The continual threats of demolition, the constant shortage of basic facilities, the indifference of government officials, the contempt of society, the rising prices of food and other necessities, the lack of medical treatment, the difficulty of obtaining school admissions for their children, and the scarcity of jobs all contribute to a sense of insecurity on the part of slum residents.

This insecurity is evident in the discourse of the poor, in particular with reference to housing problems. Slum residents consider their move to the city to be permanent, but conditions associated with living in a slum prevent people from feeling permanently settled. A Maratha woman who has been living in Marutinagar for seven years still wonders when she and her family will have to leave the slum since, she explained, "We do not own the land, only the house. We have not paid for the land." And a leader of the Maratha mandal remembered the early days of the slum when "Things were so bad, we never knew from one day to the next if the slum would be there." When these problems appear overwhelming, Maratha residents start to lament Indira Gandhi's death because, as one woman stated, "As long as there was Indira Gandhi it was all right for us. But now she's dead. Now who's going to look after us?" Frustration and resignation are expressed in the often repeated phrase, "*kay karayca?*" (what can we do?)

Insecurity is an important factor in the formation of relations between slum residents and leaders, since it motivates people to seek leaders who appear powerful enough to protect them and who show a personal concern for their problems. Some residents expressed agreement with the ideas of communist groups, for example, but would not support them because they felt these groups were not strong enough in local-level politics to be effective. Most residents distrust all politicians and complain of their self-interest and lack of commitment to the poor. The disillusionment with political parties and elected officials has led residents to depend upon local leaders in the slum.

The slum residents' view of local leadership assumes that leaders are necessary because they know things that ordinary people do not know. A Maratha woman explained, "The mandal leaders are men who know more about the outside world. They know where to go for what work and how to get work done from various government officials. They are knowledgeable people, so naturally they become leaders." Knowledge, in the slum, implies practical ability and leaders "know how to get work done." A related belief among slum residents is that the majority of the poor not only do not know how to get work done, but in fact never can know. They cannot acquire this knowledge because they are too busy surviving. A Maratha woman who worked 60 hours a week in construction explained that "There are educated people in this slum, but they don't tell us anything and we also don't have any time to go and ask them. We just don't have any time. We just work and live. I don't know anything. From home, I just go to work, eat and sleep. That's all."

Given these considerations, there appear to be two strategic options for leaderships which structure the relation between leaders and followers in diverse ways. Either leaders can share their practical knowledge and resources, establish an egalitarian relationship with their supporters, and provide the basis for people to develop a critical consciousness and empower themselves; or they can withhold their knowledge and resources, establish an asymmetrical

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relationship with their followers, and perpetuate a dependent consciousness among them. The leadership strategies of the Dalit and Maratha mandals respectively illustrate these options. Zelliot's (1978:102) study of the Dalit movement reveals that "What is especially interesting throughout the Mahar movement is that its leadership, however elite they themselves become, have sought to extend the legitimacy won in the exercise of their new functions to those still caught in the lower reaches of society." My research with a militant Hindu organization indicates the opposite strategy for the Maratha leadership. In the following section I will discuss the activities of the Dalit leaders in Marutinagar, which support an egalitarian pattern, and those of the Maratha leadership, which daily reinforce a structure of authoritarian paternalism among the caste Hindus.

Dalit self-empowerment and Maratha paternalism

The teachings of Dr. Ambedkar are adhered to today by the various political, cultural, and activist groups that together constitute the Dalit movement. These organizations range from reformist to radical, but their main goal is economic and social equality, and the prominent feature of their political practice is the emphasis on education. The belief in the value of education is impressed continually upon the Dalit people by their leaders, and has become widespread among Dalits in cities and villages. A college-educated Dalit who worked in construction noted that in his village the Dalits were poorer, but more educated than the Marathas, and that Dalit parents make tremendous sacrifices to educate their children: "They work as agricultural labor, they remain half-naked, they don't eat enough, but they feel that they must educate their children."

The Dalit leaders in Marutinagar distinguish their mandal from other Dalit groups by their style of education. Some groups, they maintain, educate through marches, rallies, and conferences; others, through force. The Dalit mandal believes in practical education, which is especially effective in the slums. Quite often, government clerks withhold important information from underprivileged groups and, due to illiteracy and lack of experience, people in slums are not always aware of the rights to which they are entitled. To counter this, Dalit leaders focus on practical education, wherein the knowledge of "how to get work done" is provided to all Dalits by the more educated and experienced members of the community. The mandal has started adult and children's education programs to provide basic reading and writing skills; it conducts regular classes to teach children the principles of Ambedkar's philosophy and legends of the Buddha; it holds study circles to familiarize Dalits with municipal rules and regulations; and it encourages men and women to accompany leaders to the Municipal Corporation to speak with officials and present their demands.

The success of this strategy became evident to me when some Dalit women became aware of the government's regulation regarding widows' pensions. They managed to get a duplicate of the rule and held meetings to acquaint themselves with the document. But when they went to the Municipal Corporation the clerk told them that there was no such rule. The women then went to the senior officer, quoted the number of the government regulation and demanded assistance. The senior officer was obliged to instruct the clerk to help the women.

The mandal's practice of education has expanded the resources of the Dalit community and has established an egalitarian basis for relationships between leaders and followers, and men and women. Mandal meetings are open to all members of the community, including women, and the mandal encourages women to participate in political activities. Dalits have obtained loans from banks and from the government, have acquired ration cards and school admissions, and have petitioned the electricity board for lines to their section of the slum. These may seem like small achievements, but the bureaucratic process involved in any of these activities requires lengthy delays and time lost from work, knowledge of government rules as well as read-

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ing and writing skills, and interaction with caste Hindus in positions of power. The self-defined goal of the Dalit mandal is to give the people, through the practice of education, the means with which to undertake these activities with dignity and success. The strategy of self-empowerment, rooted in Ambedkar's teachings and embodied in the autonomous and egalitarian relationships within the Dalit community, has allowed Dalits to become a meaningful cultural and political force in the slum and to stand as a major force of resistance to the growing hegemony of militant Hindu organizations.

The practices of the Maratha mandal stand in sharp contrast to those of the Dalits. Maratha leaders emphasize the importance of establishing personal and community bonds among Hindus. As they explain:

> Our way of working is that whenever there is any function in anyone's house we make it a point of going, whether the occasion is happy or sad. We always go and offer our help. Everyone comes together and sees it through. We keep personal contact. We know almost every household in the slum. It's not like a city, it's more like a village. And at some time or other, everyone has some work with us and they come to meet us. The people staying here are from different villages, different areas, different regions, different castes, but if any outsider comes and sees the slum, he would not see the difference because all of us live like one family. There are always people in some kind of difficulty. When they come to know that there is this [mandal] which helps them, they come to the [mandal]. People who join us feel that "these are my people and they are helping me." We don't make any conscious effort to get people into the [mandal]. Those who come into [our] contact or get to know [us] also get to know the philosophy of Patit Pawan.

The personal bond mandal leaders establish with caste Hindus is the conduit through which the ideology of militant Hinduism becomes a part of the commonsense thinking of the slum residents. Within the symbolism of the family, the mandal represents the *ma-bap* (mother and father) of the Hindu community and acknowledges its duty to serve the members of that community. Members, in turn, are expected to show their loyalty to the leadership by acquiescing to its authority and allowing it to mediate for them in all slum matters. The mandal assumes the authority for dealing with government officials; settling internal disputes and maintaining order in the slum; initiating and collecting money for community celebrations; obtaining favors and benefits for residents; and determining who may or may not move into the slum.

The structure of authoritarian paternalism established through the mandal's practice of social work concretizes the assumptions of militant Hinduism in several ways. First, the fact that the mandal performs social work only for caste Hindu residents in the slum reinforces the notion of Hindu unity that is central to the goal of Hindu Rashtra. Second, while the Maratha leaders use their knowledge of "how to get work done" to help Hindu residents, they do not make that knowledge itself available to the residents. They neither take residents to meet elected officials nor attempt to instruct them regarding government rules. Instead, they reinforce the dependence of the Hindu residents by encouraging them to come to the mandal for help with school admissions, ration cards, and water and electricity problems. The lack of benefits and facilities is interpreted by the mandal as "atrocities done on the poor," which reinforces the perception of Hindus as victims. Third, the perceived victimization of Hindus supports the belief that Hindus are engaged in a struggle for survival and need the protection of a strong organization. The mandal views its social work for the Hindu community as protection against atrocities, which are assumed to be the result of the assistance and protection minority communities receive from the (secular) state. The mandal thus justifies struggle, through violent means if necessary, against the Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist enemies of the Hindu people.

The success of the mandal's political practice is apparent in the extent to which the assumptions of militant Hinduism have penetrated the commonsense thinking of the Hindu residents in Marutinagar. Caste Hindus view Muslims as racially distinct from themselves and argue that Hindus and Muslims "are each of different blood so we cannot help fighting one another." They acknowledge that Marathas need the mandal and Patit Pawan for protection because "Dalits are getting help from the government and the Dalit organization is strong. This hurts Marathas." They see Dalits as "people from far-off areas [who] are low caste and have more

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influence with the government. People like us do not get jobs. Those people get the jobs first." They worry about the number of Hindu conversions to Islam and Buddhism and how it will affect the numerical advantage of Hindus in elections. And they believe that Hindu unity is necessary for their survival. A male resident from the *Mali* (Gardener) caste, who was not a member of either the mandal or Patit Pawan, expressed his support for the mandal and his fear of minorities in this way:

> I go to [the mandal] if I need help. We are all Hindus and proud of it, but I don't have time to participate. But we are all kept informed. . . . Hindus are scattered and that's why we have been oppressed by Muslims. To prevent this, Hindus must unite and attack their enemy and protect themselves. I believe this and I also believe that Muslims are my enemies. I don't trust them. They'll put a knife in your back. If Patit Pawan is involved in Hindu-Muslim riots it's all right with me. It's not right if Hindus attack Muslims first, but this usually doesn't happen. Look at Pakistan. Zia betrays India's friendship and makes atom bombs. How can we trust them? Aurangzeb committed atrocities on Hindus. How can we forget that? Because of this past history, we are scared of Muslims.

The fact that a low-caste non-Brahman shares an interpretation of Hindu reality with the Maratha mandal leaders becomes even more significant when it is realized that a Brahman member of the RSS would have given a similar response. Militant Hinduism speaks to the existential conditions of the lower castes and offers an interpretation of their reality that, whether true or not, provides for them a sense of unity with more powerful members of society. At the same time, the mandal's practice of social work neither effects change in the structural conditions of the poor, nor makes accessible to them the tools needed for their self-empowerment. The notion of a Hindu community that is perpetuated through the practice of social work bonds the Maratha leadership to the caste Hindu residents and symbolizes their collective sense of victimization and their belief that unity through a Hindu Rashtra is necessary for their mutual survival.

The Dalit leaders' emphasis on education and the Maratha mandal's social work represent distinct practices that correspond to the political agendas of each community. The Dalits' vision of a secular and egalitarian society requires the negation of past cultural practices and the establishment of egalitarian relations within their community. The Maratha goal of a Hindu Rashtra requires a continuity with the past and a reinforcement of authoritarian practices. The future "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983) are thus embryonic in the practices of their leaders.

conclusion

The significance of Dalit resistance in Marutinagar goes beyond the boundaries of the slum and involves the growing threat of militant Hinduism and its ultimate political goal, the establishment of a Hindu state. The appeal of militant Hinduism traditionally has been to Brahmans from the urban middle and lower-middle classes (Chandra 1984). The penetration of this ideology into slums like Marutinagar signals not only a caste alliance between Brahmans and non-Brahmans, but a class alliance between sectors of the middle and working classes. This "middle and working class bloc" has the potential to expand the social base of militant groups, which already are effecting significant cultural changes through their work in the slums, factories, villages, and colleges throughout India. In these arenas, the grass-roots cultural resistance of Buddhist Dalits and other nonhegemonic communities remains one obstacle to the establishment of a Hindu state. Their resistance underscores the point that political conflict for control of the state is integrally linked to ideological conflict for control over the cultural constitution of society. Practices through which the powerful attempt to appropriate culture are countered by those through which the weak refuse the realities and identities imposed upon them. Cultural practices thus are inevitably bound to the dialectic of hegemony and resistance.

notes

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[1]Ideology has been conceptualized within the dualist methodology of Western social science. The concern with the relation between social knowledge and social structure, or between superstructure and base, led initially to the analysis of ideology as a system of ideas. The assumed lack of fit, or correspondence, between ideological concepts and their external referents was proof that ideologies misrepresent social relations, and this assumption has set the limits of studies of ideology. In the context of the "sociology of knowledge," ideology was assigned the role of an inferior, partial, determined, and false form of knowledge, or consciousness, in relation to scientific truth.

The influence of structural linguistics and literary theory suggested an alternative approach to ideology. One could ignore ideology's external referent and focus on its internal structure, that is, on its language and meaning. Ideological discourse and meaning, conceived within the metaphor of the text, could be detached from particular histories and authors and become objectified "in the world." Objectified meanings require no eternal criterion of truth, but instead are open to a variety of interpretations, through the consensus of which social reality itself is constituted. The "sociology of knowledge" is transformed thus into the "relativity of knowledge." (See Hall 1977 for an overview of the study of ideology as it has developed from the Kantian and Hegelian traditions.) For theorists interested in practice, however, neither of these approaches to ideology is adequate. Asad's (1979:612) critique of anthropological studies of ideology noted the inappropriateness of "drag[ging] in epistemological questions when discussing problems regarding the constitution of . . . society, and the part that systematic ideologies can play in the reproduction or transformation of that object" (see also Asad 1987). In this paper, I conceptualize ideology as an articulation of ideas and cultural practices whose production, reproduction, and effects are given priority over truth value and internal structure.

[2]Hegemony and dominance are related but distinct concepts. Following Gramsci (1971:57), hegemony is conceptualized as the intellectual and moral leadership exercised by political actors in order to achieve legitimation in the eyes of their allies. Hegemony, or leadership, must be demonstrated before a group can acquire power, through the exercise of which it then may achieve dominance, or political control. But the dominance of a particular group is contested repeatedly by other groups and must be reinforced continually through moral and intellectual leadership. In this sense, it may be more appropriate to shift the focus of analysis, from "structures of dominance" to "struggles for dominance."

[3]Untouchability was abolished legally by the Indian constitution. Dalit, meaning broken, ground-down or downtrodden, is a casteless term preferred by most ex-Untouchables in Maharashtra. For this reason, I have used it rather than other references, such as *harijan* (child of God), given to Untouchables by Gandhi and still used by many Brahmans, but considered by Dalits to be patronizing; or Scheduled Caste, which came into use with the 1935 Government of India Act, replaced both Untouchable and depressed class, and is used in official matters. Dalit may refer to any ex-Untouchable, but Dalits in Marutinagar are from the Mahar caste, which represents approximately ten percent of Maharashtra's population and is the largest and most politicized of Maharashtra's ex-Untouchable castes. (The other two large ex-Untouchable castes in the state are Mangs and Chambhars, which together represent less than four percent of the population.) Since 1956 most Mahars, following their leader, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, have converted to Buddhism to protest their mistreatment by caste Hindus. They now refer to themselves as Buddhist Dalits.

[4]Marutinagar is a fictitious name. The development of the slum from an illegal squatter settlement to an officially recognized *jhopadpatti* (slum settlement) took more than a decade of confrontation with city officials and landlords and resulted in the politicization of the slum residents. For further historical and ethnographic detail regarding Marutinagar see Contursi (1988).

[5]I prefer the term "militant Hindu" to revivalism, communalism, nationalism, and fundamentalism because it better identifies the ethos of members of these groups, who believe they are soldiers of Lord Shiva and Ganapati (Hindu deities) committed to an aggressive defense of Hinduism. But these alternative terms similarly refer to the phenomena in India in which religious community identity is used as the focus for separatist and (often violent) political activities. See Chandra (1984) for a discussion of the economic and cultural roots of the communal problem.

[6]Patit Pawan means "uplifter of the downtrodden" and was adopted as the name of this militant organization to symbolize its agenda of Hindu unity and high-caste concern for the oppressed. The name comes from the Pan-Hindu temple built at Ratnagiri by the nationalist leader, V. D. Savarkar (1883–1966). The Patit Pawan temple was a place "wherein all Hindus irrespective of caste could assemble for prayers . . . for Pan-Hindu worship, Pan-Hindu functions and Pan-Hindu propaganda" (Keer 1966:184–185). Savarkar is recognized by Patit Pawan members as the intellectual and spiritual mentor of the organization, although his own affiliation was with the Hindu Mahasabha, an early militant and parliamentary group for which he served as president from 1937 to 1942. Prior to that he had been sentenced by the British to two transportations for life and spent the years 1911–24 in jails in the Andamans, Calcutta, Ratnagiri, and Yeravada.

[7]The conception of society as composed of heterogeneous elements contradicts the notion of society as an a priori whole or totality. Thompson (1984:62) acknowledges the "pervasive *fragmentation* of the social order and a proliferation of divisions between its members." Wolf (1988:759) recognizes the heterogene-

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ity, interaction, interpenetration, and interdigitation in societies and suggests conceptualizing social phenomena "in terms of relations engendered, constructed, expanded, abrogated; in terms of intersects and overlaps, rather than in terms of solid, bounded, homogeneous entities that perdure without question and without change." Moore (1987) suggests looking at individual events, rather than total wholes, and recognizing that struggles to construct the social order are permanent. The flexibility of social relations renders actors capable of many forms of coalescence. The notion that diverse social fragments form alliances, or social blocs, which are held together through the ideologies and practices of leaderships derives from Gramsci (1971). In this paper, I refer to a "middle and working-class bloc" as the recent interclass alliance of urban small businessmen, professionals, government clerks, and college students with working-class slum residents. The political activities of this alliance are expressed in part through militant Hindu organizations.

[8]In addition to the caste Hindus and Dalits I discuss, there are seven Telugu-speaking Lamani families who migrated from Andhra Pradesh and work as contractors in the construction industry; four Marathi-speaking Maharashtrian Muslim families engaged in casual labor; a Gujarati family that owns the single food shop in the slum; and two Brahman families.

[9]Marathas are a high caste and numerically the largest in Maharashtra. Since Independence they have dominated the rural economy and local-level state politics. The caste includes regional and village landowning elites as well as the majority of small peasants.

[10]The participation of the RSS in parliamentary politics has been a point of debate among members and so the organization has always kept itself structurally distinct from its parliamentary representatives. In Marathi-speaking areas, traditionalist members of the RSS initially refused to participate in its parliamentary experiments and preferred to focus on nonparliamentary organizations. Hence, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) was formed in 1964 in Bombay, and Patit Pawan was founded in 1969 in Pune. See Andersen and Damle (1987) for an analysis of the political development of the RSS.

[11]Patterson (1988) gives a low estimate of the damage by mob violence throughout Maharashtra as between 12 and 20 million 1948 dollars. She argues that anti-Brahman violence was fueled by feelings of anti-Chitpavanism and represented the culmination of centuries of rivalry between Marathas and Chitpavan Brahmans. Chitpavans are one of five major Brahman *jatis* (endogamous units) in Maharashtra. They have dominated the political and intellectual life of the Marathi-speaking people since the 18th century when they served as *peshwas* (prime ministers) for the Maratha rulers. Their accumulated economic and political power was a source of resentment by non-Brahman castes, particularly Marathas, who challenged their privilege during the 19th and 20th centuries (O'Hanlon 1985; Omvedt 1976). Nathuram Godse, Gandhi's assassin, was a Chitpavin Brahman.

[12]The Varkari sect, the predominant bhakti sect in Maharashtra, attracts hundreds of thousands of Maharashtrians on its pilgrimages to Pandharpur each year. In the 20th century, Brahman elite have increasingly participated in the pilgrimages and have compromised many of the principles initially propounded by the saint-poets (Mokashi 1987). See Karve (1962) for an anthropological discussion of today's bhakti movement, and Lele (1987) for the reasons the movement has taken a conservative turn.

[13]The term Maratha has had various meanings since the 17th century. At that time, Maratha could refer to any Marathi-speaker, regardless of caste, who belonged to the Maratha nation. Besides this nationalist usage, Maratha also implied a caste identity. The term referred to a small social elite that differentiated itself from the mass of the peasants and called itself Maratha, rather than *kunbi* (peasant). These elite families, which in theory number only 96, claimed genealogical links with north Indian Rajput families and higher caste status than ordinary peasants. Since the 1940s, Maratha refers to the high-caste Maratha agricultural community, including both elites and kunbis, and the term *kunbi* is no longer used. See O'Hanlon (1985) for a discussion of the term and its historical usages.

[14]*Dharma* derives from the Sanskrit root *dhr,* which means "to hold together." Hindus believed that society was held together by each individual and group performing their proper duty. Hence dharma is the performance of one's proper religious and social duty through which the social order may be maintained. See Parekh (1986) for the importance of this term in Hindu political thought.

[15]Zelliot (1987) also suggests that the bhakti tradition legitimized low-caste radical activity, such as the Untouchable movement.

[16]Members of other ex-Untouchable castes in Maharashtra also have converted to Buddhism, but not in the same numbers as have Mahars. There also are significant numbers of ex-Untouchable converts to Buddhism in most large urban areas throughout India.

[17]Hindu Rashtra can be translated either as Hindu nation or state. The general translation of the term as Hindu nation expresses the cultural goal of the RSS: to create a culturally integrated Hindu society, or nation. More recently (since 1951) the RSS has entered the arena of parliamentary politics. Thus, although the RSS and its organizations continue to emphasize the cultural nature of their agenda, their political involvement necessitates modifying the connotation of Hindu Rashtra to include the political idea of a Hindu state. Exactly what would be the nature of a Hindu state is a matter of debate. Savarkar appealed to the Hindu Mahasabha to:

> Let the Indian State be purely Indian. Let it not recognize any invidious distinctions whatsoever as regards the franchise, public services, offices, taxation on the grounds of religion and race. Let no cognizance be taken whatsoever of man's being Hindu or Mohammedan, Christian or Jew [1984:18].

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Present-day militants for Hindu Rashtra, however, oppose affirmative action programs for minorities; consider Pakistan to be still a part of India; want to establish a common civil code for all citizens and abolish the personal laws of minority religious communities; believe that any decline in Hindu numerical superiority will mean the end of the Hindu nation; and consider conversion to other faiths as an anti-national act. As one informant in Patit Pawan explained, "We don't want Hindus to be dominant over others, but [if] Muslims have to stay with Hindus in this country [they must] do whatever Hindus do." The nature of a future Hindu Rashtra may be more apparent from the activities of militant groups than from the theoretical writings of their founders.

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